



Wounded Spirits, Ailing Hearts 3 Ceremonies Written Video Transcript

Still, there are families and communities who have ways, in some cases rediscovered ways, to reach out. They return to longstanding ceremony that honors their warrior's sacrifice and accomplishments.

My family and I, we get together and we talk about let's have a prayer [00:00.20.00] (time) in Navajo traditional way, (not enemy way) or either have a blessing (way) or have some kind of (singing done) so that will help him. And he goes along with us.

Primary care providers can help break this [00:00.40.00] destructive cycle and assist their patients in joining the many Native American veterans who have stopped using alcohol and made their lives and their families' lives whole again.

After I took treatment, I really became aware of a lot of issues and a lot of things that [00:01.00.00] had been plaguing me, things that I didn't understand. I had a better knowledge and better understanding of some of these things.

Since I've been seeing the VA and learning more about my condition that [00:01.20.00] light has turned into a tunnel and now I know there's a direction. And to me, that's satisfying. It takes away the anxieties but it doesn't take away the fears yet. [00:01.40.00]

Access to care for PTSD and related problems varies enormously by geography, the types of service required and the system offering service. For example, in the American Southwest, the nearest VA Hospital and significant specialty services often are hundreds of miles [00:02.00.00] from the reservation borders.

Once I had some personnel from the VA Medical Center from Prescott, Arizona come out here. And they had wondered why it took so long for Navajo (Veterans) to make the (appointment). (They must travel the day or) two before and I had them travel [02:18] Arizona [00:02.20.00] with the (method of) transportation we had available, it took them three days to get there.

In the American Indian Vietnam Veterans Project we paid careful attention to the nature and extent of the participants' use of VA, IHS, and other private providers. They included state and private hospitals, treatment centers or clinics [00:02.40.00] and private physicians. Forty six percent of these combat veterans reported that they had used the VA, IHS or other sources within the past year for treatment of physical ailments but only 16% sought care for treatment of alcohol, drug, or mental disorders [00:03.00.00] even though it was available, despite three quarters of the men in the study needing these very



same services. And though IHS facilities were closer, veterans were much more likely to go to the VA for help with alcohol, drug, and mental health problems. The vast majority of Indian veterans rated [00:03.20.00] VA treatment good or excellent. Veterans gave these reasons for not seeking healthcare. It's too far away. They used other healthcare. They wanted to solve the problem on their own. They didn't believe that the problem was serious enough. They didn't believe that the treatment would help, nor did they believe that the agency offered needed [00:03.40.00] care. They distrusted it. They believed that there was too much red tape, that the quality of care was poor. They worried about what others would think. They didn't believe that they were eligible and they were worried about racial prejudice. As you know, many American Indian and Alaskan Native communities have powerful [00:04.00.00] traditional forms of healing. Some are diagnostic in nature, others use everything from simple herbal treatments to elaborate therapeutic healing practices. Prayer and ceremony tap the strength within the Indian family, community and the Creator. The Native American veteran often draws upon these strengths in coming [00:04.20.00] to terms with his or her illness and in becoming whole once more.

I used the sweat ceremony. You know, through all those years, you know, I'd go. And it would really bring the good out of me, you know, [00:04.40.00] make me feel good and give me strength and reintroduce me to some of the things I may have forgotten.

Native American church, you know, I—it helped me stay away from drinking. You know, I was medicating myself [00:05.00.00] with alcohol and it helped me stay away from that. And it put me back on the right road for, you know, for a while.

Then the whole restoration process [00:05.20.00] in that (beauty way) setting ceremony is one experience that restores that harmony back to where you can operate again within the four mountains here on Navajo and be able to [00:05.40.00] continue where you had left off.

More than 40% of the participants in the American Indian Vietnam Veterans Project told of frequent visits to traditional healers for help with physical, alcohol, drug and mental health problems. Until recently, mainstream medical practitioners considered [00:06.00.00] traditional healing ineffective, even dangerous. Some believe that the two approaches competed and viewed them as mutually exclusive. Today, conventional medicine and alternative forms of healthcare are less polarized. Though considerable skepticism remains, there is increasing cooperation. [00:06.20.00] This is clearly the case in Native American communities. Witness the remarkable April, 1998 memorandum of agreement in which the VA now reimburses the Navajo Nation for a portion of the costs associated with the traditional healing of their veterans. Indian and Native veterans seek all types of help [00:06.40.00] consistent with local availability and personal preference.

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